



Opioids and Brain Injury Facts

Brain injuries can lead to opioid use, *and* opioids can lead to brain injuries:

- **70-80%** of people with brain injuries leave inpatient rehabilitation with a prescription for opioids.
- An **opioid** is a drug that relieves pain. Prescription painkillers include oxycontin, Vicodin, morphine, and oxycodone. Fentanyl and heroin are also opioids.
- Opioids can slow or stop your breathing if you take too many. If the brain goes without oxygen for more than 5-6 minutes, a person may sustain an **acquired brain injury**.
- A **traumatic brain injury** is an injury to the brain caused by external force, like a fall.
- People who have had moderate to severe injuries are **10 times more likely to die from an overdose** than those who don't.
- People with traumatic brain injuries are at **much higher risk for opioid misuse** and overdose.

What are some problems for people with brain injuries?

- Trouble remembering information (e.g., names, appointments, when to take medications)
- Trouble managing behavior and emotions (e.g., getting angry or upset more easily than before the injury)

What are the consequences of these problems?

- Taking too much or too little medication
- Mixing medication with drugs or alcohol
- Trouble staying in treatment for brain injury, addiction, or mental health services
- Trouble paying attention, remembering appointments, following directions, or completing tasks

--- SEE OTHER SIDE FOR SOLUTIONS ---

Tips and Strategies for Managing Opioids and Brain Injuries

Tips for Managing Common Brain Injury Challenges

- Use a physical calendar or day planner
- Use a pill organizer
- Talk with your doctor before using drugs or alcohol
- Let your doctors know you are living with a brain injury
- Post emergency medical info on your phone's lock screen image
- Explore free apps. Brainline's [Life-Changing Apps for People with Brain Injury](#) suggests:
 - Accessibility apps
 - Stress management tools
 - Brain exercises and word games
 - Audio books
 - Dictation apps to capture spoken language
 - Verbal apps that speak written words
 - Digital calendars
 - Wheel chair accessible destinations
 - Location sharing
 - Concussion recognition

More Strategies

- Advocate for yourself. Tell your doctors and therapists what you need to be successful (e.g., request appointment cards if you have trouble with your memory).
- Share resources and strategies that work best for you with friends and family members.
- Learn about the risks of opioid use disorder, especially after an injury.
- Become certified in giving naloxone, a medication that reverses opioid overdose.

Resources

Opioid Resources (BeforeItsTooLate.Maryland.gov)

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment (<https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/locator>)

Brain Injury Association of Maryland (<http://biamd.org>)

Ohio State Univ.'s Traumatic Brain Injury training program (<http://tbi.osu.edu/modules>)



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